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RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/51/L.45/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1)]

51/194. Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolutions 46/182 of 19 December 1991, 47/168 of 22 December 1992, 48/57 of 14 December 1993, 49/139 A and B of 20 December 1994, 50/57 of 12 December 1995 and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1995/56 of 28 July 1995 and 1996/33 of 25 July 1996,

Reaffirming also the guiding principles contained in section I of the annex to its resolution 46/182,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General,[1] in particular of the attention paid by the Secretary-General to effectiveness, accountability and transparency in humanitarian assistance under increasingly complex operational environments and the need for further efforts to identify and support the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development,

Taking note of the establishment, within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, of Reliefweb, for the dissemination of reliable and timely information on natural disasters and other emergencies,

Taking note also of the relevant decisions of operational agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system concerning their participation in a coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies,

[1] A/51/172-E/1996/77.

Recognizing the need for coordinated humanitarian assistance and adequate financial resources to ensure a prompt, timely and effective response by the United Nations to natural disasters and other emergencies, both for immediate relief and for the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development, which are not necessarily sequential and often proceed at the same time,

Bearing in mind the critical importance of prevention, preparedness and contingency planning for a timely and effective response to both natural and other emergencies by the Governments concerned and the international community,

Welcoming the request to the Secretary-General by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1995/56, to submit to the Council, at its substantive session of 1997, in close cooperation with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, a comprehensive analytical report, including options, proposals and recommendations for a review of issues concerning the role and operational responsibilities and strengthening of all aspects of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance,

Deeply concerned about the suffering of victims of disasters and emergency situations, the loss of human lives, the flow of refugees, the mass displacement of people and the material destruction,

Reaffirming that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and, in this context, that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal of the affected country,

Reaffirming also that each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory, and hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory,

Strongly emphasizing the urgent need to ensure, respect and promote international humanitarian law, principles and norms, the safety of humanitarian personnel and the need for States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance, in particular the supply of food, medicines, shelter and health care, for which access to victims is essential, and reaffirming that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality,

Concerned about the impediments created by natural disasters and similar emergencies to the development efforts of the affected countries, and welcoming the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, to promote disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures,

Commending the activities of the United Nations Volunteers, and of the "White Helmets", deployed in the context of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 49/139 B of 29 December 1994 and 50/19 of 28 November 1995, as well as other activities to improve, in accordance with resolutions

46/182 and 50/19, the capability for a quick and coordinated response to natural disasters and other emergencies,

Reaffirming the need for the improved accountability of all relevant actors involved in emergency relief operations,

1. Encourages Governments to ensure coherence in the direction given to the governing bodies of relevant organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and to thereby promote the development and strengthening of the cooperation between these organizations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, drawing on the mandate, expertise and respective strengths and available capabilities of each, to improve the system-wide capability for a quick and coordinated response to complex humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters;

2. Urges all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to participate actively in the follow-up process established by Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56;

3. Calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as a contribution to the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1997, develops options and proposals to further define operational responsibilities between its members, drawing on their respective mandates, expertise, strengths and available capabilities, to identify cooperative arrangements to strengthen their joint capacities and to strengthen its work in priority setting and formulation of coherent humanitarian strategies;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1997 recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on measures aimed at making it a more effective and transparent mechanism, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, for inter-agency decision-making on coordination;

5. Emphasizes the need for the Secretary-General to draw on the discussions and conclusions in the various governing boards, as mentioned in paragraph 1 above, on the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, on the results of the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in this regard and on the assessment of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, when contributing to the report of the Secretary-General, in order to ensure that all relevant issues are coherently addressed and appropriately reflected;

6. Encourages all relevant agencies of the United Nations system to collaborate closely at the country level in carrying out their relief activities, in order to enhance the overall policy coherence, operational complementarity and cost-effectiveness of the response of the United Nations system in emergencies;

7. Encourages the Secretary-General to develop further, in consultation with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a transparent and timely procedure for putting into place effective coordination arrangements in the field;

8. Encourages members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to cooperate closely with each other, as well as with the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks, to ensure that relief,

rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development is addressed in a more effective manner, taking into account the need for a clearer division of responsibilities between different actors;

9. Encourages the Secretary-General to strengthen further the cooperation and coordination between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant departments of the Secretariat to ensure an effective and coherent United Nations response to natural disasters and other emergencies;

10. Calls upon States to respond quickly and generously to consolidated appeals for humanitarian assistance, taking into account the importance for donors to be flexible in their response to the specific requirements of affected populations, for rapid-response as well as for early rehabilitation and recovery;

11. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to include in his report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1997 proposals for the clearer identification of priority needs and the formulation of a coherent humanitarian strategy within consolidated appeals, and to ensure that consolidated appeals are formulated in a manner consistent with the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development, and also requests the Secretary-General to invite States to submit their views on this subject in due time;

12. Invites the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to make recommendations to the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session in 1997, on possible ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, taking into account the revolving nature of the Fund, to ensure a timely response in the initial phase of an emergency, and taking into account the need for transparent complementarity between the Fund and the individual emergency funds of operational agencies, and requests the Secretary-General to invite States to submit their views on this subject in due time;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to further develop Reliefweb as the global humanitarian information system for the dissemination of reliable and timely information on emergencies and natural disasters, and encourages all Governments, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other relevant organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to support Reliefweb and actively participate in the Reliefweb information exchange, through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs;

14. Encourages the Secretary-General to develop further the Humanitarian Early Warning System, to make it fully operational as soon as possible and to consult all States on the use to which the database could be put, as well as its further development, taking into account that early warning information should be made available in an unrestricted and timely manner to all interested Governments and authorities concerned;

15. Calls upon the United Nations system to strengthen accountability in the field of humanitarian assistance, in particular through improved monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that:

(a) Organizations of the United Nations system involved in humanitarian assistance activities develop common methodologies for data

collection and reporting, situation analyses, needs assessment, monitoring and tracking of resources, in order to ensure an effective and timely response;

(b) Clearer arrangements are made for system-wide evaluation, that the lessons learned from evaluation exercises are systematically applied at the operational level and that joint evaluation criteria are developed for humanitarian and disaster relief operations at the planning stage;

16. Urges all operational agencies of the United Nations system to collaborate fully with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, particularly in the early phase of an emergency, inter alia, by providing the Department with sufficient support in terms of human and logistical assets, to enable it to enhance coordination and the rapid-response capability of the system as a whole;

17. Stresses the critical need to create a sound and predictable financial basis for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to enable it to carry out fully its mandate, and encourages the Secretary-General to continue to explore all possible options to achieve that goal.

87th plenary meeting
17 December 1996